



44th District 1997 Session Report

Sen. Jeanine Long
Rep. Dave Schmidt
Rep. Bill Thompson



June 1997

The most efficient session in 40 years

Dear neighbors,

The 1997 legislative session was a landmark. It marked the first time since 1957 that we completed a budget-writing session on time. Special sessions have been the rule rather than the exception. This year, for the first time in several generations, taxpayers will not pay the extra staffing and workload costs of a special session.

At the same time, we passed major policy initiatives, including juvenile justice reform, welfare reform and property tax relief.

This letter outlines highlights of the just-completed session. Please take a moment to read through it. We welcome your views on these and any other issues. If you have concerns or views you'd like to share, or if you need help dealing with a state agency, please call or write. We'll be happy to hear from you.

Sincerely,


Jeanine Long


Dave Schmidt


Bill Thompson

The 1997 Legislature ***What the media said:***

"Rousing success for Legislature"
— *Everett Herald*, 4/28/97

"GOP triumph in Legislature"
— *Everett Herald*, 4/28/97

"Bipartisan effort defies predictions of gridlock"
— *The News Tribune*, 4/28/97

"A legislative session to write home about"
— *Seattle Times*, 4/29/97

"An action-packed, productive legislative session"
— *The News Tribune*, 4/28/97

You're invited!
**Town Hall
meetings**
Saturday, June 28

● **11 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.**
Mill Creek City Hall
15728 Mill Creek Blvd.
Mill Creek

● **2 p.m. — 3:30 p.m.**
Clearview Firehouse
8010 180th St. S.E.
Snohomish



Sen. Jeanine Long

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As chair of the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee, criminal justice issues dominated my work during the 1997 session. I have invested years on issues ranging from juvenile justice reform to sex offender sentencing because they have had so much impact in our Snohomish County communities. This year, the Legislature considered a number of the measures I have been working on over the past several years that represent significant policy changes in our criminal justice system.



Juvenile Justice

The Juvenile Justice bill, HB 3900, was one of the most important bills of the session.

So I was pleased when the Senate passed my version of this bill, which included the ideas I've been developing as a member of the Senate Law and Justice Committee and the House Corrections Committee for the past several years. The result was a bipartisan measure that passed unanimously in both chambers of the Legislature. This legislation combines prevention and early intervention with longer sentences for all young offenders, and it adds intensive supervision at release for the highest risk offenders. We need to make juveniles accountable, but we can't just talk tough. As the mother of five, I know you don't allow your children to repeat and repeat a behavior that's wrong. You have to stop it, intervene in a positive way and help them get on with their lives.

The overriding theme of HB 3900 is accountability for juvenile offenders. The juvenile sentencing grid is simplified and made tougher beginning with a juvenile's first offense. Detention, including "boot camp" is an available option for all juvenile offenders. Finally, the prior convictions of juveniles are no longer automatically stricken from their criminal histories if they become adult offenders, and juvenile records will no longer be routinely sealed.

These changes were needed, but they deal only with crimes after the fact, and they trigger action only after a crime has been committed. I was honored during the bill signing when Gov. Gary Locke singled me out as one of the legislators responsible for ensuring HB 3900 was a balanced approach to juvenile justice reform. My approach emphasized both punishment and intervention. Provisions of the bill allow local communities to create intervention programs and direct the necessary resources to local priorities. And parental involvement is emphasized by requiring parents to attend hearings when their children are charged with crimes.

The real key to reducing juvenile crime lies within our communities and the adults who can act as positive role models. Children come into this world innocent, but in so many cases what happens between the birth of a baby and when we see them in our juvenile system changes that. Those of us who get involved and take whatever little steps we can to encourage a child, become their friend and correct their behavior when necessary will make the real difference in reducing youth violence.



Sex predators and other corrections issues

Several other corrections measures I have been working on over the past several years became law this year or will make significant changes in state corrections policy.

SB 5759 The state's public notification law helps protect the public when sex offenders move into communities. But because of inconsistencies in the way each local jurisdiction classifies sex offenders and notifies the public, citizens might not know which criminals being released are the most dangerous. I introduced SB 5759, which requires state corrections agencies to classify sex offenders into risk levels for the purpose of public notification prior to release. The bill also identifies appropriate notification options for offenders

in Risk Level I (low risk), Risk Level II (moderate risk) and Risk Level III (high risk), and asks the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to develop a model policy for public notifications.

SB 5621 We require sex offenders to register in their county of residence, but until now, registration requirements have not applied to kidnappers. I introduced this legislation to include in the state registration program all kidnapping offenses and sex offenses where the victim is a minor. Had this bill been in place, the tragic murder of little Roxanne Doll in Snohomish County might have been prevented.

SB 6002 This measure creates a pilot program for mentally ill offenders who have served their full sentence and have been released into the community. If we reduce some of the factors that cause them to reoffend, we may be able to increase public safety. These special offenders often need mental health care, special housing, medication and long-term treatment to avoid repeat offenses. We'll monitor up to 25 mentally ill offenders to determine if access to specialized services reduces their risk of reoffending.

SB 5006 This measure was not signed into law, but has become the basis for a task force recommendation designed to protect the public if the 1990 civil commitment statute is overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. The 1990 law allows us to keep the most dangerous sex offenders confined indefinitely. My bill, using a different approach than the 1990 law, would allow those sex offenders to be kept in prison up to the maximum sentence for their crime, which is life.



Rep. Dave Schmidt

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Charting a new course toward government efficiency

Government can learn a lot from people in our business community. This summer, I will chair a subcommittee that will examine ways to improve our delivery of services.

We want to provide the best service at the lowest cost for our citizens. We cannot do that until we give our agencies and our workers the opportunity to compete. We must allow our workers to shrug off the shackles of bureaucracy.

We hope to follow the example set by the city of Indianapolis, where the mayor has reduced the city's operating budget by \$26 million since taking office in 1992. Without raising taxes for eight consecutive years, the city has managed to invest more money in public safety and infrastructure improvements.

The Indianapolis project is a true partnership between government officials and employees. By working together to develop a new municipal work ethic, they have increased productivity immeasurably. While city officials have pursued private sector contracting, they have also created opportunities for employees to submit competitive bids of their own. In many cases, the employees have outbid their private sector competitors.

All of these approaches have been undertaken with the cooperation and participation of public employee unions. This is the kind of government reform we need. My subcommittee will be listening to various ideas on how to improve efficiency in the coming months, and I want to encourage you to share your thoughts on this issue.



Tackling transportation issues

This year, we are conducting a performance audit of the state Department of Transportation. When this audit is complete, we should be able to determine exactly how our transportation dollars are being spent. I know this is an issue of concern for many residents, and I look forward to hearing from you when the results of the audit become available.

Transportation is particularly important in the 44th District. Our population is growing, and the pressure on our overworked roads becomes greater every day. We are in line for a number of improvements, especially addressing safety concerns on State Route 522, one of the most dangerous highways in the nation. There have been 1,780 accidents, 1,359 injuries and 47 deaths on the highway in the last 15 years. The longer we wait to begin this project, the greater the risk to citizens.

I supported a bill that authorizes spending \$7.9 million from the state motor vehicle fund to construct additional lanes on State Route 522. The project area stretches 13 miles from the intersection of SR 9 near Woodinville to Paradise Lake Road.

The bill I supported would allow the state to use a new, more efficient procedure called 'design-build.' It would allow the state to set design standards, then turn the project over to a private contractor, instead of going through the lengthy process of awarding separate design and construction contracts.

Unfortunately, this pilot project cannot go forward without funding, and our transportation budget did not include any funding for new projects. Improvements to SR 522 will have to wait at least another year. I will continue to pursue solutions to this issue.



Toll-free Legislative Hotline:
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TDD: 1-800-635-9993



Rep. Bill Thompson

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Allowing taxpayers to keep more of their own money

As a member of the House Finance Committee, I worked diligently to overhaul the regressive and unfair elements of our state's tax system. We introduced more than 200 tax reduction bills during the 1997 session. Not all of them passed, but we've created a culture in Olympia that favors lowering taxes.

The Legislature did adopt \$411 million in tax cuts this session, including property tax relief, a repeal of the 1993 increases in the business and occupation tax, and a host of tax reform measures aimed at creating new jobs. These measures will keep more money in the pockets of taxpayers and in our local economies.

"They (GOP) seem hell-bent on reducing government."

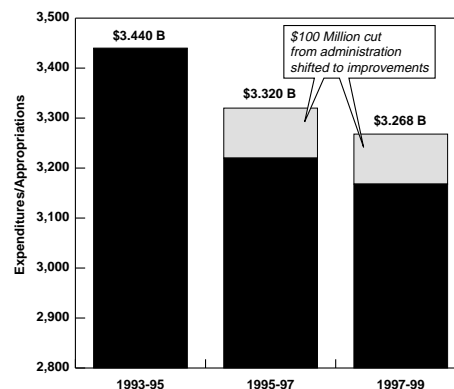
*Gov. Gary Locke
Seattle P-I, April 22, 1997*

While the governor and I disagreed on many things this session, I would agree with his assessment of the Republican-controlled Legislature. In 1995 we fought hard for an operating budget that was below the Initiative 601 spending limit, even though Gov. Lowry and the big spenders insisted that we spend right up to the limit.

This session many Democrats called for a breach of I-601 so that they could increase the limit and spend more of your tax dollars. Once again we stood up to the big spenders and held spending well below the limit. This not only saves taxpayers' money this biennium, but it lowers future spending limits by a total of \$804 million over the next six years.

We will continue to demand fiscal responsibility and improved efficiencies in state government.

1997-99 Transportation Budget



We eliminated \$200 million in administrative costs in transportation over the last two bienniums. The money we saved is being used to fund highway improvement projects. This was critical as actual dollars for transportation have decreased over the past five years.



Wetland and forest practices studied in the interim

During the legislative interim, I hope to head up two important research projects in our state: one to look at the functions and definition of wetlands and another to review

our state's forest management practices.

Defining wetlands

There is evidence that thousands of acres designated as wetlands in our state do not serve a wetlands function. The result is useless restrictions on private landowners that prohibit them from using their own property. I will be leading a bipartisan effort to look at the functions of wetlands — aquifer recharge, wildlife habitat, etc. — and to consider the use of these factors as a basis for classifying wetlands.

I am the chairman of an interim subcommittee on wetlands. We have already held our first meeting and have brought all parties to the table to seek common ground and workable solutions to the wetlands issue.

Forest practices

The financial return that the taxpayers of Washington receive on the management of its forest lands is abysmal. I will be leading an interim committee to determine why the state is not receiving an adequate return on many of these valuable resources.

A 1996 study shows that private forest landholders received a 16.1 percent average return on investment in 1995 while the state of Washington received a return of only 8.5 percent. The state's lack of timber revenue is severely shortchanging funding for school construction and counties. By increasing the state's return on its timber resource, we can provide millions more in revenue for these beneficiaries.

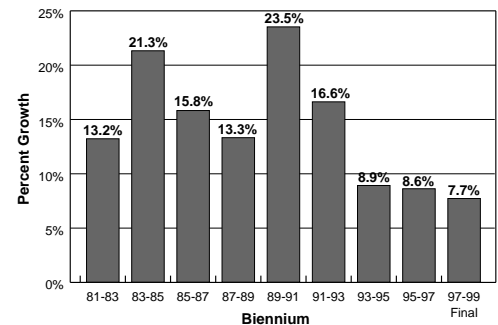
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Spending less, saving more

Our budget for 1997-99 is \$19.07 billion. **This is the smallest state budget increase — 7.7 percent — since 1971.** The final budget is \$112 million below the Initiative 601 spending limit. In the three years since Republicans gained a majority in the state House of Representatives, we have consistently held spending down. And by staying below the 601 lid, we reduce spending that much *more* over time — potentially saving taxpayers \$804 million over the next six years.

Spending slowdown – state budget growth since 1981



Education

We promised to make education a high priority, and we have kept our word. Our budget increases education funding by 7.5 percent over the biennium — an increase that stays ahead of enrollment and exceeds the inflation rate. We increased funding in the following specific areas:

SLICING UP THE BUDGET — PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Total public school spending

'95-'97 \$8.28 billion

'97-'99 \$8.90 billion

Annual per-pupil spending

'97 \$4,561 per student

'98 \$4,635 per student

'99 \$4,729 per student

Specific increases

Teacher salary increase

(3 percent on 7-1-97) — \$176 million

School construction — \$75 million

Technology grants — \$39 million

Instructional materials purchases — \$20 million

(average: \$458 per classroom)

We also established clear priorities in K-12 education, with an emphasis on academics, discipline and choice. We sharpened the focus on reading in the primary grades with greater teacher training and better assessments to identify students who need early assistance. We gave teachers and school districts more latitude and authority to address discipline and gang problems.

Tomorrow's education at today's prices

We know that young people with college degrees have a better chance to find family-wage jobs. But working parents are understandably concerned about the rising costs of higher education. This year, we've instituted a program that allows parents to purchase future college credits at current tuition rates.

Parents can purchase up to four full years of college credits as their child matures, and then apply them toward tuition at any of our state colleges. The credits purchased would not shrink over time. What you pay for today is what you will receive tomorrow. This an excellent way to provide broad access to education for our young people. The program is still being developed, but it should be up and running by next year.

Juvenile justice

We have completely reformed the way we protect our neighborhoods from young criminals. Our juvenile justice bill, which passed unanimously, enacts the most significant changes in 20 years. This is a major achievement, and a true victory for our citizens.

The measure achieves the following objectives in our juvenile justice system:

- **Greater accountability**
- **Tougher penalties for serious, violent offenses**
- **Sentencing alternatives to punish every offender**
- **Criminal history follows juveniles into adulthood**
- **Required parental involvement**
- **Separate housing and schooling for juveniles sentenced to adult prison**

Welfare reform

This year saw the culmination of a four-year struggle to reform welfare. The Legislature passed and the governor signed a bill that replaces our broken welfare system with provisions that emphasize personal responsibility and work. Welfare recipients will abide by the following conditions:

- Time limits on benefits (five years)
- Requirements to work, search for work or perform community service
- Child care assistance for working parents
- Job training
- Teen parents must live at home and progress toward a diploma or GED to receive benefits

We have fully funded this program, which we call the Personal Responsibility Act of 1997. Coupled with changes to the federal welfare system, we believe we will help families to free themselves from the cycle of dependency.

Transportation

Our transportation budget provides funding for existing projects that are already underway, as well as ongoing maintenance. We also approved a performance audit of the Department of Transportation, which will give us a clearer idea of how to use our existing revenue more efficiently.

The following local improvement projects will continue to receive funding in the transportation budget:

- **SR 522** — *SR 9 to Paradise Lake Road* (\$36,419)
- **SR 525** — *I-5 to SR 99* (\$727,853)
- **SR 525** — *SR 99 to SR 526* (\$6,266,305)
- **SR 525** — *SR 99 interchange* (\$8,146,784)
- **SR 527** — *164th Street Southeast to 132nd Street Southeast* (\$6,204,134)
- **SR 527** — *132nd Street SE to 112th Street SE* (\$1,040,625)
- **SR 527** — *I-405 to 164th Street SE* (\$339,517)
- **SR 524** — *York Road Junction* (\$571,402)
- **SR 9** — *SR 522 to 228th Street SE* (\$2,741,610)
- **SR 9** — *228th Street SE to 212th Street SE* (\$246,819)
- **SR 99** — *SR 525 interchange to Manor Way* (\$139,752)
- **SR 99** — *North corridor - HOV improvements* (\$877,333)
- **I-5** — *236th Street to 164th Street* (\$1,942,585)
- **I-5** — *Ash Way Park and Ride* (\$4,030,043)

Tax relief – *Property taxes*

This year, the Legislature approved \$411 million worth of tax cuts. One of our first actions of the session was a vote to prevent an immediate property tax increase in January. We extended a 4.7 percent reduction in the state property tax levy through 1997.

Several other property tax relief measures were passed by the Legislature, but vetoed by the governor. In response, we have placed our proposal on the referendum ballot this fall. The voters will make the final decision on whether to accept \$220 million worth of property tax relief.

The ballot measure would make the 4.7 percent state levy reduction permanent. It would limit the property tax “spikes” that result from unexpected assessment increases. Also, it would limit property tax increases at the state and local level. Currently, governments are allowed to increase property taxes by a maximum of 6 percent each year. The measure would limit increases to 6 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower (inflation has been running at about 3 percent), and require a vote by local government to increase property taxes.

This property tax relief package would save the owner of a \$110,000 home which appreciates 5 percent a year approximately \$23,000 over 30 years.

Small business tax relief

This year, we voted to complete the rollback of a heavy tax increase on small businesses imposed in 1993, during the Lowry administration. The first half of the rollback was passed in 1996 and vetoed by then-Gov. Lowry. The Legislature overrode the veto. We voted for the second half of the rollback this year. The repeal takes effect in July 1998.

We also passed a tax credit for small businesses that clarifies eligibility for tax credits and makes it easier to compute the amount of tax.

Capital budget

The following local projects were approved for funding in the capital budget for 1997-99:

- **University of Washington Bothell campus/Cascadia Community College** — *Design and construction* (\$46 million)
- **Instructional Technology Center** — *Everett* (\$16.4 million)
- **Children’s Museum of Snohomish County** (\$394,000)
- **Lake Goodwin County Park** (\$435,000)

Printed on recycled paper



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